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The Uses of a Spy

The movies could never have improved on this fade-out—Gary Powers walking into the sunset with his \$50,000 in withheld pay after his vindication by the CIA, amid the plaudits of the Senate Armed Services Committee and the packed caucus room. What a happy ending! As *The New York Times* correspondent said: "For a man who twenty months ago was widely criticized in Congress and the country for not killing himself, it was a hero's redemption." It shows not only that one should never despair of success, but that in the profession of spying one can succeed in other ways than by obtaining information about the enemy.

When the unsuccess of Gary Powers wrecked the Summit Conference of 1960, it was nevertheless made plain to all good Americans that this was really the fault of the Russians and that the image of Khrushchev, in particular, had been much too generously delineated. All good Americans also knew that Powers was now in for such brainwashing and torture that his one regret would be that he had not used the poison needle with which the CIA had thoughtfully provided him. The stereotype thus emerging from the Powers affair is as indestructible as Mount Everest. Powers testified, both in Moscow and in Washington, that he was not tortured or ill-treated in any way, but this in no wise alters our views of the enemy. We do not concede that he is human. We are certainly no more optimistic about the chances of coming to a peaceful agreement with him. The pseudo-event, produced in the ateliers of Madison Avenue, is more powerful than any actual event.

While our enemy grows blacker, our own virtue glows with an ever more golden light. What brought down the house was Powers' simple statement that, throughout his captivity, "There was one thing I always remembered while I was there, and that was that I am an American." At that moment, though perhaps only for that moment, Mr. Powers was almost as beloved as Colonel Glenn. The boy from ol' Virginie had made good. Before the Moscow tribunal, he had expressed his regret for his mission and had told the court that he felt he had let his country "a very ill name." At the time this seemed plain English and to good Americans, including some sections of the press, it seemed to border on treason. But before his adoring audience in Washington, Powers was able to explain that he had made a mistake of his captors. He had not been that he regretted his mission at the time of his mission of bringing back information from the enemy's installations, and had not had any other purpose in mind. The enemy is a very wicked and cruel, and very smart. The American people are not so smart.

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